

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00
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O R 071835Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2441
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5277

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, SF, WA
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: AUTHORITY OVER POLICE AND THE MILITARY

REF: USUN 03448

1. PARA A REFTEL REQUESTS INFORMATION ON WHEN AUTHORITY OVER THE POLICE AND MILITARY IN NAMIBIA MIGHT BE TRANSFERRED TO STEYN. FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY RESPONSE.
 2. WE BELIEVE STEYN COULD THEORETICALLY ASSUME AUTHORITY OVER THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE BY ISSUING A PROCLAMATION COUNTERSIGNED BY THE STATE PRESIDENT. SUCH A MOVE WOULD IMPROVE OPTICS REGARDING THE POLICE AND PERHAPS RESULT IN A MORE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE CONTROL THAN IF PRETORIA CONTINUED TO EXERCISE DIRECT AUTHORITY.
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3. THE SAG, HOWEVER, HAS MADE NO COMMITMENT TO TRANSFER AUTHORITY OVER THE POLICE TO THE AG. NOR TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAS IT GIVEN SUCH A MOVE SERIOUS THOUGHT. WE HAVE INFORMALLY RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, BUT HAVE NEVER RECEIVED A CLEAR ANSWER. THE SAG POSITION IS PRESUMABLY GOVERNED BY WHAT IT ASSERTS IS ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAW AND

ORDER AND THE SECURITY OF THE TERRITORY UNTIL THE DAY OF INDEPENDENCE. STEYN, OF COURSE, IS AND WILL REMAIN THE AGENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IN NAMIBIA. TURNING OVER TO HIM IMMEDIATE CONTROL OF THE POLICE WOULD THUS NOT MEAN THEY CEASED TO BE EFFECTIVELY A SOUTH AFRICAN FORCE, THOUGH SUCH A MOVE COULD POSSIBLY EASE THE UNSR'S PROBLEMS. THE SAG MIGHT ULTIMATELY BE PREVAILED UPON TO TAKE SUCH A STEP, BUT WE DOUBT IT WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO SO UNTIL SOMETIME AFTER THE TRANSITION PROCESS BEGINS. AHTISAARI SHOULD RAISE THE QUESTION WITH STEYN WHEN THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED.

4. THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SAG WOULD TURN OVER CONTROL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY TO STEYN IS MORE REMOTE. THE SAG DOES NOT WISH TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS IN ANY WAY RELAXING ITS CLAIMS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SECURITY OF THE TERRITORY OR RELINQUISHING ITS RIGHT TO HAVE A MILITARY PRESENCE THERE. AS THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY IN NAMIBIA, UNLIKE THE POLICE, WILL HAVE NO ROLE ONCE THE TRANSITION IS WELL UNDERWAY AND WILL ULTIMATELY BE REDUCED TO A TOKEN FORCE CONFINED TO BASE, WE WONDER WHETHER TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY TO STEYN IN THIS CASE IS A PRESSING REQUIREMENT.

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